

Claims

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A smart audio guide system for use in conjunction with an interactive content distribution system that includes a distribution head-end that makes programming available for viewing on a video display device at a viewer subsystem, the viewer subsystem including an audio unit to provide audio for the video display unit, the smart audio guide system comprising:
 - 5 a recommendation engine for providing a customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem based upon the programming available from the interactive content distribution system and a customized viewing profile developed for the viewer subsystem;
 - 8 a processing unit configured and operative to implement the smart audio guide system functions;
- 10 a smart audio guide audio package that includes at least a plurality of smart audio guide audio clips corresponding to the customized viewing-recommendations list; and
- 12 a smart guide actuator that is configured and operative in response to one or more predetermined conditions to activate the processing unit;
- 14 wherein said processing unit is configured and operative to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when activated to identify programs recommended for viewing at the viewer subsystem based upon the customized viewing-recommendations list.
- 1 2. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are uttered without a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.
- 1 3. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are uttered in synchronization with a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.
- 1 4. The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein the corresponding visual presentation is a graphical recommendation menu, and wherein the processing unit is configured and

3 operative to implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the
4 graphical recommendation menu in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of
5 smart audio guide audio clips.

1 5. The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein corresponding visual presentation is an
2 electronic program guide and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to
3 implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the electronic
4 program guide in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of smart audio
5 guide audio clips.

1 6. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising a speech generating unit,
2 and wherein the smart audio guide audio package further comprises a plurality of smart audio
3 guide text files; and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement the
4 speech generating unit to convert the plurality of smart audio guide text files into the plurality of
5 smart audio guide audio clips.

1 7. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the viewer subsystem further includes a
2 viewer control unit and wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a button on the
3 viewer control unit, which when depressed, activates the processing unit to cause the plurality
4 of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer
5 subsystem via the audio unit .

1 8. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator
2 comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart
3 audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via
4 the audio unit when the video display device at the viewer subsystem is initially activated.

1 9. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator
2 comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart
3 audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via
4 the audio unit at the conclusion of a programming period.

1 10. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator
2 comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart
3 audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via
4 the audio unit upon activation of a graphical recommendation menu on the video display device
5 at the viewer subsystem.

1 11. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator
2 comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart
3 audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via
4 the audio unit upon activation of an electronic program guide on the video display device at the
5 viewer subsystem.

1 12. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the processing unit is configured and
2 operative to temporarily discontinue the audio associated with programming being displayed
3 via the video display device at the viewer subsystem when the plurality of smart audio guide
4 audio clips are being uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio
5 unit.

1 13. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein each of the plurality of smart audio
2 guide audio clips has an audio format that includes a first portion identifying a program name
3 and a second portion identifying a viewing channel.

1 14. The smart audio guide system of claim 13 wherein each of the plurality of smart audio
2 guide audio clips has a supplemented audio format wherein the first portion and the second
3 portion are supplemented by additional audio information such that each of the plurality of
4 smart audio guide audio clips has a sentence format.

1 15. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising:
2 means for selecting a program for viewing from the customized viewing-
3 recommendations list corresponding to one of the uttered smart audio guide audio clips.

1 16. The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a
2 viewer control unit having a plurality of numbers for selecting viewing channels and wherein the
3 selecting means comprises the plurality of numbers of the viewer control unit, and wherein

4 selected ones of the plurality of numbers corresponding to the viewing channel of the one
5 uttered smart audio guide audio clip are sequentially depressed to select the program for
6 viewing corresponding to the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.

1 17. The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a
2 viewer control unit having a select button and wherein the selecting means is the select button
3 of the viewer control unit, and wherein the select button is depressed during utterance of the
4 one uttered smart audio guide audio clip to select the program for viewing corresponding to the
5 one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.

1 18. The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a
2 viewer control unit having a plurality of numbers and wherein the processing unit is configured
3 and operative to activate individual ones of the plurality of numbers of the viewer control unit to
4 correspond to viewing channels associated with the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips,
5 and wherein the selecting means comprises the individually activated numbers of the viewer
6 control unit, one which is selectively depressed to select a viewing channel corresponding to
7 the program for viewing associated with the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.